



## Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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### House 5742 The Health, Education, Welfare Committee State House – Room 135 March 23, 2005

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**RI CDHH's Assessment:** Very Beneficial

**RICDHH's Position:** Recommend Passage

**RI CDHH's Rationale:** Reduce financial hardship on people who need the hearing aid(s).

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As you know, a single hearing aid may be quite very expensive and I understand the insurance companies' concern from their economic standpoints. The prices per hearing aid are between \$1,000 and \$3,500 depending on the level of hearing loss individual has and the type of hearing aids (conventional, programmable, and digital). Many hearing aid dealers offer many different brands and sizes of hearing aids and features on hearing aids such as 2 channels of sounds, 5 channels of sounds, noise reduction, etc. It is generally a practice to have professional audiologists conduct the hearing tests and identify which type of hearing aid that would work best for the individual.

Like I said earlier, it is already financial hardship for anyone who really needs one or two hearing aids. In this bill, HB 5742, "20% of the cost of or \$400 whichever is smaller" is amended. The RI CDHH wholeheartedly supports this because it is a fair compromise between the insurance companies and the audio-disadvantaged population. It is not fair for anyone who has the hearing challenge has to pay ALL of the costs.

We found it ironically that most of the same insurance companies are willing to pay for the full cost of cochlear implants up to the total of \$60,000 each patient PLUS follow up costs but they would not be willing to cover the partial cost of hearing aids.

Also, all hearing aids shall be prescribed by certified audiologists or qualified ear care providers so this way, the insurance companies can trust their quality of services. The similar principle for getting glasses that must be prescribed by the eye care providers such as optometrists or opticians. I want

to emphasize that people with hearing loss are outnumbered by people with prescribed glasses and yet, the insurance companies are able to provide incentives for those people with glasses but not for those with hearing loss.

It is very important for the individual to find the right type of hearing aid for their hearing loss regardless the cost of hearing aid. Some individuals have very profound hearing loss that would need very powerful kind of hearing aids. Someone who has some residual hearing loss would need good hearing aid to pick up the right level of sounds for better hearing.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, we fully support this bill.

Once again, I want to thank you for giving me an opportunity to share our concerns with you and I strongly encourage you to take serious consideration. For some reason, if more research is needed on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me for more resources that would help you to make a better decision. I can be reached by e-mail, [SFLORIO@CDHH.RI.GOV](mailto:SFLORIO@CDHH.RI.GOV).

Honorably Submitted by:

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